



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn
**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Families Matter: *Supporting Families in Northern Ireland*

**The Department of Health, Social Services and
Public Safety's Proposals on a Regional Family
and Parenting Strategy**

Response Document

January 2007

Consultation Questions

Please respond to the consultation document by e-mail, letter or fax.

Responses should be sent to:

e-mail: familypolicyunit@dhsspsni.gov.uk

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Responses must be received no later than **30th March 2007**.

(Please tick a box)

I am responding: as an individual on behalf of an organisation

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Supporting Families

1. **Do you agree that the aims stated are the right aims? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

The benefits to children, their families and wider society from investment in support which will enable parents to be better informed and develop effective parenting skills are well documented. There needs to involve all lead agencies & key government depts in meaningful partnership to co-ordinate strategic provsion in this area.

2. **Do you agree that the vision stated is the right vision? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

The stated vision focuses on outcomes for children - not families. The vision should more clearly represent the viosisn for all family members - parents equally have the right to be valued, reach their potential, etc.

3. **The document lists 10 principles that underpin the strategy. Do you agree with the principles stated? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

- 4. The document lists 7 outcomes from the Children and Young People's strategy, 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge'. Do you agree that these are the right outcomes for this strategy? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

Although at times the emphasis is somewhat narrow or even worded from a negative perspective, e.g. making a positive contribution is about much more than 'not engaging in anti-social behaviour, etc.' It would be possible to rephrase to emphasise the positive contributions ...

- 5. The focus of this strategy is primarily on preventative and early intervention to support parents at particular times of need and at particular stages in the development of their child. Do you think that this is the appropriate scope for the strategy? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

NI needs to use this opportunity to raise the profile of families and the need to improve parenting skills for ALL families. There is no evidence currently that parenting is regarded as a priority by any key government departments - and supportive work with parents is thus not appropriately targeted or resourced.

Priority Themes

6. Do you agree that Theme 1 – Parental Support is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

Absolutely - this has been sadly missing in our society.

7. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 1 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

There is an over-emphasis on health & not sufficient emphasis on interagency working, eg in building on existing multiagency parenting projects such as DELTA, or liaising with education re info for parenting programmes. Also important to extend beyond Surestart areas, eg rural areas deprived of any quality family support.

8. Do you agree that Theme 2 – Access to Information is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

9. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 2 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

10. Do you agree that Theme 3 – Assessment of Needs is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

11. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 3 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

12. Do you agree that Theme 4 – Information Sharing is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

13. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 4 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

14. Do you agree Theme 5 – Integration and Multi-Agency Working is an appropriate theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

15. Do you agree the actions suggested in Theme 5 are appropriate actions to take under this theme? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

The establishment of 6 Chn's Centres will only target a small number of families in those areas. This theme has much wider implications and there should be opportunity here for the key agencies to agree additional actions to ensure more effective integration/multi-agency working to benefit all families in NI.

Equality Implications

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Departments and other public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to

the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Where there is evidence or an indication that an existing policy is having an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, or that a proposed policy may cause an adverse impact, an **Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)** may need to be carried out on the policy. The process used by a public authority to determine whether an existing policy or new policy needs an EQIA is called **screening**.

The Department is now screening the proposals set out in this consultation document and as part of the screening process, the Department invites you to consider the following questions.

The Department is inviting responses to the following questions:

- 17. Are the actions or proposals, which are set out in this document likely to have an adverse impact on any group of people in terms of the nine equality dimensions? (Please tick)**

YES

NO

If yes, please state the reasons why.

- 18. Are you aware of any indication or evidence – qualitative or quantitative – that the actions or proposals in this document may**

have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity or good relations? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If yes, please state the reasons why and how these might be mitigated.

19. Does the proposed strategy and actions afford an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations? (Please tick)

YES

NO

If no, please state the reasons why.

Some concerns that some of the actions continue to be targeted to families in areas which are already well-funded, eg Surestart - many families in need in geographical areas which rarely receive funding from other streams, eg rural areas. Need for more universal provision and actions.

Additional Comments

20. Do you have any other comments, which you think might be relevant to the development of the strategy?

This strategy provides an opportunity to raise the profile of parenting and families in Northern Irish society. The emphasis at times however appears to reflect the DHSSPS perspective and doesn't make sufficient use of the opportunity to promote much more meaningful partnership working. There is a great need particularly for health and education to liaise in this area. The strategy could have a much wider impact if education had been involved in agreeing the themes and actions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMENTS